



PUBLIC HEALTH LAW

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

Law made an indispensable contribution to the great public health achievements of the 20th century, but has not kept pace with rapidly evolving public health challenges. For example,

- *Healthy People 2010*, the prevention agenda for the nation, concluded that “many laws, rules, regulations and ordinances pertaining to public health are outmoded.”
- A 2002 Institute of Medicine report stated that outdated and inconsistent public health laws may lead to inadequate responses to public health crises.
- Public health practitioners and attorneys have limited access to law-related training and information about best practices.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

In 2000, CDC created the Public Health Law Program to stimulate a national initiative to upgrade public health’s legal tools. Integral to CDC’s strategy to strengthen the nation’s public health system, the program helps state and local health departments and other partners build their capacity to apply law as a tool in advancing the public’s health. The program conducts research on public health laws, develops law-related training, and provides a forum for strong, cross-disciplinary partnerships.

Examples of Program in Action

- Experience has shown that public health and law enforcement agencies need better coordination and understanding of their respective roles and responses to bioterrorism and other emergencies. To address this issue, the Forensic Epidemiology course was created to train public health and law officials in effective, joint investigations of terrorist attacks and other public health emergencies.
- Canada and other countries affected by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in 2003 made greater use of quarantine (a law-based intervention), than seen globally in the previous half-century. CDC sponsored U.S.-Canada teleconferences on quarantine during the outbreak and commissioned an independent study of legal lessons learned during the outbreak.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

In 2004, CDC, in collaboration with the Department of Justice, state and local partners, will support the following:

- Disseminating the Forensic Epidemiology course nationwide.
- Developing an Advanced Forensic Epidemiology course.
- Providing technical assistance to states and communities assessing their public health emergency legal preparedness.
- Sponsoring the third annual conference in public health law.

For additional information on this or other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/program

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